

Tribal State Relations Committee Meeting
September 28, 2011
Northern Cheyenne Tribe

College Tuition increases

The Northern Cheyenne Tribal Education Department provides need based scholarships to Northern Cheyenne Tribal members under a PL 638 Contract for Higher Education and Job Placement and Training or Adult Vocational Training . These funds are received each year from the Bureau of Indian Education under the Department of Interior under the Indian Priority System. The Tribe also has a Tribal Scholarship Fund that is used for those students who are not eligible for a PELL Grant from the Federal Government. Tribal Scholarship funds are limited to the interest earned from the principal that the Tribe invested for scholarships.

Northern Cheyenne students are funded at instate and out of state post secondary institutions. These are four year and two year institutions. The Tribe also funds graduate students in the amount of \$3,000.00 per academic year. The maximum amount of funding for any student is \$6,000.00. Many student budgets go beyond the \$6,000 and students must seek other scholarships or take out student loans to cover the cost of education. For the academic year 2010-2011, 86 students were funded and 17 students needed the \$6,000.00. For the academic year, 2011-2012 86 students were funded and 58 required the maximum funding \$6,000.00. The Tribe was fortunate to receive additional scholarship funds for the Fiscal year 2010, which carried over to Fiscal year 11. For Fiscal year 12, as you know, is uncertain as to what the budgets will be because of the deficit reduction. We are very concerned about the funding levels for the students who were approved by the Scholarship Committee for this academic year.

Presently, the Committee has approved the 73 students for higher education scholarships in the amount of \$402,977.00 for instate and out of state students. Compared to last year we spent 282,401.00 on scholarships for instate and out of state students. We might not spend all the \$402, 977.00. This will depend on whether students will drop or be suspended from the program. The \$402,977.00 does not include the students applying for spring semester. The future looks very bleak in providing any scholarships for spring semester. As of today only one student has dropped for fall semester. The retention rate for the 2010 academic year was 75% for instate and out of state. Our retention rate has been as high as 98% . The scholarship program graduates 16 to 30 students per year. Each year it is a challenge to keep our students in college and moving towards graduation. This gives you an overview of what we face this academic year with the increased cost of tuition and cost of education overall.

Montana is no different in increasing tuition and the cost of education. 30 Northern Cheyenne students are being funded in state in the amount of \$144,197.00 for MSU Billings , MSU Bozeman and the University of Montana. 22 two year students are funded at a cost of \$126,703.00 for Chief Dull Knife College, Miles Community College, Salish Kootenai College and Little Big Horn College. As compared to, 35 students were funded for four year institution in

Montana in the amount of \$129,585.00 and 29 students at 2 year colleges in the amount of \$73,191.00 for the 20/2011 academic year. More students were funded for less funding for the academic year 2010/2011. The comparisons for the major universities for tuition/fees and cost of education are:

University of Montana:	2010/2011	2011/2012
Tuition and Fees:	\$5775.00	\$5586.00
Cost of Education	\$18,000-\$20,000	\$18,000-\$20,000
MSU Bozeman:	\$6170.00	\$6440.00
Cost of Education	\$18,600-\$20,000	\$18,800-\$20,000
MSU Billings	\$5240.00	\$5460.00
Cost of Education	\$16,410.00	\$16,630.00

Chief Dull Knife College also raised their tuition/fees from \$1680.00 to \$1,960.00 and the cost of living from \$11,268.00 to \$14,060. Student budgets vary depending on whether the student is single or married and their income levels. These are just examples of the increases for this academic year for Montana.

The Tribal Education Department tries to cover the student loans that are packaged in the student's budgets. Unfortunately, at time we cannot pick up the total loan. We do expect our students to access campus based aid such SEOG, Direct Student Loans and other scholarships. We also expect the Sophomores to Seniors to accept the Work Study funding. Freshman are exempt from the Work Study. Many of our students have to work outside the college to make ends meet, especially if they have families. There are other Northern Cheyenne students at Montana Colleges that we do not fund. These students must access the campus based aid as well as student loans to get them through college. We process approximately 300 to 400 applications a year. The majority of these students do not complete the application process or decide not to attend college or they go to college on their own.

We are fortunate in Montana to have the Indian fee waiver. This funding assists those students who meet the criteria of need based and ¼ degree Indian Blood. Some students do not meet this criteria and cannot access these funds. The majority of our students qualify for the PELL Grant and that amount is \$5500.00. We also do not know if this amount will be maintained due to the budget crisis.

I recently attended the Board of Regents meeting MSU Billings. Tyler Trevor presented some interesting data for Montana. Data on the growing student debt was a concern to me because our students are taking loans to cover their cost of education. He said student loans are growing. Certificate Programs - 65% of the students are borrowing and have a debt of \$12,089. Two Year Programs - 69% of students are borrowing and have a debt of \$17,397.00 and the 4 year Programs - 63% of the students are borrowing and have a debt of \$22,811. In the nation 55% of students are borrowing with a debt of \$19,807.00. The University System is trying to

understand why students are borrowing at this high rate and will be reporting to Regents on their findings. If tuition and cost of education continue to rise, Northern Cheyenne students, will have to take more loans so the Tribe can continue fund as many students as possible.

Recommendations:

The State Legislature must fund the University System adequately to prevent more tuition increases. Federal funding is uncertain and the Northern Cheyenne Tribe will be put in the situation of decreasing the number of students we fund to attend college. If the Tribe is going to grow economically we need an educated workforce who will return home to work.

The second recommendation is for the State Legislature to assure there is adequate funding for the Indian Fee Waivers. We could not fund the number of students in Montana without the Fee Waivers.

The third recommendation is to fund Indian Education for All at the University and College level. Our students need to know they are part of the University system. I firmly believe, if they could to see themselves as part of the college curriculums, they would do much better in college. OPI has shown something is working in the K-12 system for American Indian students because of the increases in test scores. Indian student's levels are rising more than non-Indians in math, reading and science. Granted we still have an achievement gap but scores are increasing. I think part of the reason is Indian Education for All and the work OPI is doing in implementing Indian Education for All in the K-12 system.

Thank you for this opportunity to present and I will look forward to the next State Legislative session and the increase in funding for the University System.